Chapter 6
“A Life Well Saved”

In the early spring of 2006, Kari really changed a lot.
She was a wreck and it confused the hell out of me. Kari was no angel. We partied a bit. We did stuff on occasion. Pills, blow, drinking... we had been together three years. Casually dating, but seeming like we had a future. But all of a sudden she was off the rails and I didn’t understand it at all. She talked about Ned all the time now. I thought maybe she was opening up at first, but it seemed less about me and more about him. It seemed like she was making reasons to do a lot of drugs and get out of her head all the time, and I didn’t even feel like I figured into anything next to this crazy grief that appeared out of nowhere. The haunted girl that had been fun and playful, now somber and dark. I didn’t understand grief. I certainly didn’t understand grief that was supposed to be three years old, being fresh as a few days ago... and the girl I had thought so much of, turning into this haunted person who wanted to get ripped out of her skull every time I saw her. Who when I called her on the phone would talk about Ned and then ask me if I could find her pills. I thought she was losing her mind or just becoming some drug casualty. I started to withdraw. To back away. To not call.
She started to act more and more crazy. She would make plans with me and never follow through. Call me and not talk. Sometimes I thought she was asleep on the phone. She called me once and said she wanted to kill herself. I asked her why and she said because of Ned. WHAT IS IT ABOUT NED?? The DUDES BEEN DEAD FOR FOUR YEARS! I talked her down and I could tell she was genuinely upset. But it made no sense. Was she coming unhinged?
I didn’t hear from her for a while. What seemed like months passed, and I thought, so too did our time together, that Kari and Sean were over. But I worried about her. I tried to call her and even called her folks. They said she was ok. She had just been busy. Busy?
I was at my favorite dive and she called me one day. She apologized first off. She said she had been so messed up for a while. That she had a delayed reaction to Ned’s death and it had messed her up for a while. She said she was doing better and she wasn’t doing drugs anymore. That was over. She certainly sounded different. This was 2006 in the summer of our third year. We talked like old times and I remembered why I liked her so much. She was interesting and there was so much going on in that head of hers. We talked and talked for hours. 3 hours... 4 hours... I had walked into the back of the bar where there weren’t any people, sitting on a step facing out into the yard in the back, feeling the breeze and talking to my old friend and lover. I had missed her. A lot.
We were going to meet soon. We hadn’t talked about a time, but I was happy at the thought of it. We had some good times and she was an awesome talent. And we talked until the sun started to set and didn’t run out of words and everything was perfect until she hung up on me in mid sentence.
I was immediately suspicious. I heard her hang up. Her phone didn’t die. She gasped like she heard something and hung up. It sounded like someone came home and she aborted the call. Something was up. I wasn’t dumb.

She called me back the next day and apologized and said her phone had died. I told her it sounded like her man had gotten home. She asked me what I meant and sounded way too defensive. I figured I was right. She only made it more apparent when she told me she had moved out of her parents house. And into a trailer. That made no sense. her parents house was a freaking estate. She had her own place there. She sort of came clean and said some things had happened. She made some mistakes and she was trying to undo them.
She wanted to see me. I told her I'd believe it when I saw it. She wanted to see me that night. And I told her I would be around. But she didn't come. And I started to feel like things hadn't changed.
But she called the next day and I laid into her. I wanted her to be straight with me. She said she would be. Just to give her a little time. She asked me what I was doing that night and I told her I was playing pool with my mom and singing some kareoke at her favorite bar. She said that sounded like fun. She said she would come and I said I wouldn't hold my breath. But later that night, in came Kari. Dressed to the teeth in a sexy outfit that showed off her curves and made every guy in the place leer and every old lady gasp. She was hot. And she was hot for me.
We hung out and had a few drinks and she was on good behavior. We sang some duets and did songs by our selves. She was so awesome the guy who ran the kareoke recorded our songs we did "so he could have something when we got famous"... she liked that. It was a nice night and we felt some of that old magic. It had been months and I had felt she had been through some stuff, but I had no idea what.
We spent the night together and when I woke up in the morning she was already gone.
I called her often and she talked to me a lot. And every now and then here phone would "drop the call" and I would have to wait to talk to her until the next day. We booked a few gigs and played together for the first time ever in our own little band. She agreed to do the gig, but as the time grew closer it seemed like she wasn't into it as much and I could tell she was troubled. I could also tell she wasn't the sober girl I talked to that first day I talked to her after our long break. She was spooked and frustrating. She was smoking and it made her voice a little worse than it should have been. She stopped by the quickie mart in my town on the way to the gig that night and my friend Gary was working and he recognized her. "Hey! I know you!" And Kari's eyes got huge, like she was terrified! "From where?!" she asked. "From Sean... you're his girl, right? The singer?"
"Oh... yea." He told me about this the next day. Said she looked like she had seen a ghost.
She got to the gig and things clicked ok, but it wasn't the old magic... it wasn't bad though.
The band I was playing with that night was a three piece that was very potent. A guy named Davis on the bass and my long-time drummer Mike... they were both obviously and overtly hitting on Kari... at one point in the night something hit me and it was a drumstick and I turned around and jovially yelled "FUCKER!" to which Kari said, "YOU fuck her, you BROUGHT her!" which cracked everyone up and charmed Davis the bassist, who wouldn't leave her alone after that. But at the end of the night, his plans were dashed as he saw her and I making out,

outside of the bar, under their awning... Sorry... I brought her... so I'm... um... yea!....
The band I had first seen her in had fired her and she was playing with a new band. The guitarist was on vacation for a few weeks and she called me to play with her.
I drove all the way up to her neck of the woods, an hour away from me in rural Missouri to a roadhouse band called 21 Rock and we had a nice gig there, playing all the songs she asked me to learn for that band. She was distant to me, though. She said that some of Ned's family was there, but I didn't believe it. It seemed phony. I could tell when she was lying and she knew that... but we both pretended that we didn't know that... At the end of the night I wanted to stay with her, but she said I couldn't. She said things were messed up, but they wouldn't be for much longer. She would explain soon.... but for now, she was sorry. Sorry for everything. Sorry for being crazy about Ned and being so distant for that while. There were things that I needed to know. She seemed distracted and maybe a little high.
I was friends with her band on Myspace after that and kept loose tabs. We talked on there and I saw them make an announcement that Kari wouldn't be playing that weekend. Something had come up... etc. and it worried me. Then the next week I didn't hear from her and the band put a message out saying she wouldn't be playing with them anymore. That she was too unreliable and had "issues". All this time I didn't hear from her and I couldn't reach her.
Finally she called me three or so weeks later.
She wanted me to come pick her up. She wanted to come over. She said she could even stay for a while if I wanted. I wondered what was up, but I drove up. She had moved into the bunkhouse below the hill where her parents house sat, so she had her own place now. When I got there she ran out to my truck and jumped in. She was happy! She was giddy!
"I'm so glad to see you!"
"really?"
"Yes! I've had the craziest couple of weeks!"
"Yea, I saw the band message on Myspace, I was worried!"
"Oh, that's no big deal. They were assholes."
She hugged me and laid a big kiss on me and I grabbed her hands and felt something a little odd and looked down.
"I bet you're wondering about these?"
She held up her arms and her wrists were both bandaged.
"Yea... ok... yea... what's up?"
"Well... it's a long story. Are you ready?"
"I'm always ready to hear your stories, baby."
"Baby!" she beamed, "I like that! Keep that... ok... you ready?"
"Yes!"
"I... WAS... MARRIED!"
"TO WHAT!!??"
"To a complete piece of shit! hahah"
"ok..."
"I basically was hanging out with this guy because he was Ned's friend and drug dealer and he kept me so messed up I didn't know where I was half the time. I

barely remember getting married. He was a total asshole and I got so depressed. I couldn't believe I messed up so bad. My parents were kind of disgusted and I was staying at his house... I wanted to come home, but they told me I couldn't because I was married now... I started freaking out. I wanted to go home. So I sliced up my wrists and called 911 and they got me out of there."
"So..."
"So I spent a few weeks in rehab and the psych ward and they told my parents I shouldn't be with him..."
"So that worked..."
"Yea! I don't have to be married anymore! I feel like a thousand pounds has been lifted off of me!"
"Holy shit babe. That was... that wasn't what I expected"
"Sean, it was bad. I'm so sorry. I know I've been a nut. I'm still a but. But you kind of saved me. Talking to you really made me happy and I realized that I've been so stupid all this time. I wanted out of there. I was living in a TRAILER! Can you picture me in a trailer?"
"hahah... no, now that you mention it! oh, the horror!"
"Well. It wouldn't be so bad with you. I'd live in a trailer with you."
"Oh yea?"
"Yea. I'd live in a cardboard box with you if we were together. You're my music man."
"Awww... god Kari. This is the girl I remember. My sweet little songbird."
"Songbird! I like that too! Keep that, too!"
"Holy shit. You were married??"
"Yes. His name was Brett. And he was a controlling dick that was content to keep me on as many pills as I could take. I could have died and I'm pretty sure he would have shrugged it off. I might have been his first girlfriend... if that's even what I was. I don't even remember having sex with him ever! Oh god... but I probably did. How horrible! Is that even legal?"
"Yea... probab...-I think maybe in Missouri it is... hell... I don't know. Apparently slicing up your wrists in a trailer is a sort of hillbilly annulment! So it all works out! hahah"
"Hey! Hillbilly annulment!? ...ok... that's funny. hahah"
"The whole thing reminds me of that song by Elton John... Someone saved my Life Tonight"
"I LOVE that song! You gave me that record, remember?"
"I do"
"It has the poster in it. But I don't know the story, what does it mean??"
"Well, Elton was married to a woman..."
"Real-ly?!?"
"Yes. And of course he's gay. And he was really depressed and apparently she didn't care and thought she could "fix him" or something... and he was feeling suicidal... and he had his head in the oven one day and his friend came by, I believe it was John Baldry, or Long John Baldry as he was called... anyway... he asked him "Reg, because his name was Reginald and his friends called him that, Reg, why is your head in the oven? and Elton said he didn't want to be married so he was going to kill himself. And he basically told him that he didn't have to be married if he didn't want to be. Everyone knew he was queer and wondered

why he did it anyway! And Elton was so relieved and told him that he had saved his life. And of course he mentioned that Elton had an electric oven and would have to bake himself for a long time and it would be a long and painful death...”
“hahahahah... is that true?”
“Yea, I think so”
“Well. You definitely saved my life, Sean”
“I did?”
“Yea. Talking to you that night for four hours. I was so sad when I called you. I didn’t even think you would talk to me after all the things I had done... the mess I’d been. I was sad still, but I knew what I had to do. And I knew I wanted to be with you.”
“Oh baby. I’m glad.”
“I’m glad too.... BABY!”
“Hahah... you called me baby!”
“I like it. OH! OOOH!”
“What??”
“We should record that song!”
“The Elton song?”
“Yea! I want to do it. I want to do it for you. For the same reason Elton did it for...”
“John Baldry”
“Yea! Long JOHN BALDRRY”
“Well... it’s a long ass song. Tons of words. And it’s slow. It’s ALL PIANO... and it kind of lays there. I don’t know how we”-
“Fix it!”
“Ok. But I just have guitars and like I said it”-
“You can fix it! We haven’t ever recorded and we should!”
“You’re right. Ok. Let’s do it. I’ll figure something out. And you are the best singer I’ve ever heard. The best!”
“So we’ll do it?”
“Oh we’ll do it! And then we might record a song too!”
“Bwah hah. Yea. Thank you Sean.”
“What now?”
“For being you. And letting me be me. Crazy, unpredictable, troubled, unreliable... me.”
“Kari. You’re just a sweet little songbird that lost her way for a while. But I’m glad you came home.”
We got back to my place and I put the record on and played some chords over the record... and it seemed more simple than I remembered... it was hella slow... but the chords were easy... and I thought of a rhythm I could play through the whole thing that would tie it all together better. Kari had never seen me do my thing before. And she was more than curious... she hovered inches away from me watching my mic placements... constantly asking me what I was doing... and no... not the general things, but why did I put the mic on the outside of the bass drum when I could just stick it inside... and I explained it all to her... and then I played around on the drums for a while and came out. She seemed surprised...
“are you through?”
“No. I’m creating a Loop”

“What’s a loop for?!”
“Well, I’m taking a single phrase from my drums and I’m going to make that happen over and over and over... it’s basically going to be the beat marker or metronome for the whole song.”
“So why don’t you just use the click in pro tools?”
“Because the loop has a feel to it and isn’t just TICK TICK TICK... it says something... even though it says it over and OVER... see... the sound of this when I loop it... in stead of TICK TICK TICK, it’s saying TICKET-A TICKETY-TOCK, like a complex triplet that also marks the back beat and the downbeat”
“Yea... you lost me after Tick Tock”...
“You’ll see what I mean”
I programmed the loop to go on for 12 minutes and went into the studio and after a few false starts, I got the feel for the song and played it straight through, keeping the arrangement in my head.
“So you played the whole song? without any other instruments? How were you able to count and know how long it was?”
“I was just counting and singing in my head and picturing our arrangement.”
“And you can DO that... and it WORKS?”
“We’ll see”
I laid down a bass to start... then an acoustic guitar... then I sang a real quick pilot vocal to show her where the verses started...
“I can’t believe you did it. In like ONE take!! AND ... I can’t believe you bitched about this! You can do any song! This was the hardest one, and you took what? 20 minutes? Do other people do this like you do?”
I told her I didn’t know any more... some folks used to... but it’s pretty rare these days. I checked her voice a few times and while I was getting things ready she got a little dark... a little moody... I could see it coming... she was having some kind of flashback.
“I never got to do this with Ned” she said.
“I thought you did some stuff... like you did a TV show, right?”
“Yea... but never in a studio. We went down to Branson and stayed for a few months, then Nashville called and I went to do my album right after we came back home, and Ned was already doing the speed all the time... I told him I wanted him off of it when I got back. That was silly... I didn’t know too much, I guess.” She looked haunted again. I felt it... I couldn’t imagine what it was like, but that 100 mile away stare... I could feel that.
“He was silly to not clean up for you. I think. I think he would have. He just lost his way... like you do sometimes. You never when that little detour down the alley will be the last time you do anything.”
“Yea... but who am I? He didn’t even tell me he loved me after we got back. Just that one last time I saw him.”
“Oh baby. That’s slapping my heart strings... it really is... LIKE THIS!” I slapped and popped some notes on the bass I was holding and she smiled a little.
I tweaked a few things as we heard the playback... after I had the levels set she said, “You know there are two ways to save a life.” I turned to her and gave her my attention, “there’s the one. The obvious... you save them and they live on... and there’s the other... when I are too late... you couldn’t save them... and then you take what’s there... while its’ fresh, find all the things you can that remind

you of them and you write it all down and explain why you have a champagne cork in your memories album... receipts from the gas station you saw him last... it sucks... you know? We loved each other and there's not enough to fill a little fucking scrapbook from Wal Mart! We never recorded... there are just a handful of pictures... and these memories in my head that never leave me alone."
"Is that why you're writing that book?" I asked.
"Oh, I finished that. I thought I would have more there, too. But it just wound up being a large pamphlet. 'The Pamphlet of Ned and Kari'."
I walked in and looked down at her. For some reason... every time I was more than a couple of feet from her, I imagined her being as tall as me... and every time I walked up to her, I was surprised she was still over a foot shorter. But I loved the way she looked up at me. I could tell she liked that I was so much taller and she came towards me and I held her for a moment. She was so strong. Or maybe just young and resilient... or maybe she was just happy to have found another music man who was recording with her that night... that it would all be done... that we would make up for the mistakes of her first time...
I never got to see the book she wrote. I probably never will. Her family are pure stupid and crazy... her mother is gone as of recently, and though she tortured Kari and mercilessly trolled both of us our whole time together, I can't deny that she was the last friend I had there... and Kari would have been so proud of that... because her mom never liked one guy she dated... not one.
The poster for that Elton John LP I gave her 17 years ago is still hanging in our room as it has for all this time.

Kari Jo and Sean Someone Saved My Life Tonight https://i.ytimg.com/vi/2NvhRGjiCPw/hqdefault.jpg?sqp=-oaymwEcCNACELwBSFXyq4qpAw4IARUAAIhCGAFwAcABBg==&rs=AOn4CLDFc9nht7KgE6x94bA2AvqMhu06Qw

After we had worked on the song that night, I transferred the session to my computer. I had just gotten a pro tools system to record on, but hadn't had a chance to set it up yet. We recorded the first tracks on ADAT tape…
And she came over and we added a bunch more tracks to it. But that weekend, I had an out of town gig and was being paid by the headliner to record their set. I hadn't had any idea how much space this would take up on my new hard drive, but the answer quickly proved to be ALL of it. So I had to delete the song we worked on. We had a demo version of it, but the one we were hoping to do got bumped for business. I felt bad, but she was happy

with the demo and we kept on recording, eventually… because at the time it wasn't quite the special thing we shared later on. And for years it bothered me that I erased that original… and eventually after she was gone, I decided I was going to see if I could set that right. One thing I did, was after that session, I never used that hard drive again. So I was pretty sure a lot of those recordings we did were still stuck in the deleted registry. I got some forensic software and pulled out about 30% of those vocal sessions… and then I took the demo version and placed it in pro tools, and started assembling the tracks I pulled out from the deleted files… I had enough of them to do something. But I had to edit a ton of it because many of the vocal takes had issues, and weren't kept, but now that wasn't an option. I had so much editing software and other stuff that no matter how far out the parts were, I was able to get them to conform to our arrangement. And it only took 500 or so hours to do! I wish she was still around to hear it… she would probably look at me with that cute side-eye… and say "so… you can do poof deleted songs now! Can you poof my cat back?"

She rarely ever spoke of the loser that she lived with for those few months. I was surprised when she passed and he showed up to the funeral. And he sent his MOTHER over to warn me. Lol. She said I was in danger. And I asked from who? She told me who she was. And I said him? Sweety his ass was kicked years before he even got here. I mean, does he realize that he has a lot less reason to be here? She and I were together most of her adult life, and he had a few months that she absolutely hated. That's the facts. I'm not gonna fight some spent meth cinder on her day. Tell him that. But it he makes it necessary, it'll not be pretty! Although, I'm not sure I can do much more than pharmaceuticals and father time already have!

It was a horrid day for Kari and I… and she wasn't there to make it better. As I looked around the place, I saw a bunch of people that only she could have been friends with. She had a huge heart, but I wish she hadn't set the bar quite so low… The dude's mother even contacted me the next day. I swear these folks have some amazing powers of self-delusion… to think that It would matter to me or anyone who knew us what happened to her back then… or the creep she escaped from. The only reason I even engaged in speaking to her at all, was because I was curious about a few things she said. Those days she was talking about were 13 years previous, and some of my memories of those times weren't as clear as I would like. And she had some details I wasn't aware of… I wanted to know why. But I may never know. These are the few correspondences that I had with her. Laughable in their "dramatic tone"… that she seemed to think I was in any actual danger. But that's how these people are. They will try to start a fight at a funeral for a girl they barely knew, with the guy who was the closest to her, because 13 years ago… well… I'm not even sure what he was mad about! She and I were together before and after! Lol… it boggles the mind!

I am going to ask that you do one or both. Either A - stop referring to Kari as your wife. You were roommates. My son is her widower. And/Or B - stop talking about how you all got back together. You and I both know that she was screwing you while living with Brett. I ask that you honor their marriage. It's disrespectful and hurtful to do otherwise.

5:15 PM

I actually found out she was married later. I didn't know about it until it was over. I'm curious how you know that we were... um ... "screwing"... not actually denying it... just interested as a frame of reference. I would genuinely know how you know this. Not trying to make enemies here, but she and I had a long run and I knew her for 9 years before we said the three little words. I always wanted a life with her, but she was a little wild then. I think you should honor what we had too. Which would you rather be with.. the love of your life or your husband. One or the other.... which would you choose?

You can now call each other and see information like Active Status and when you've read messages.

Well, perhaps you were on video

Can I see it?? Please??

Lol... really? I can't imagine...

What part of DANGER didn't you understand?. No way.

Ok... darn. I had no idea. You can't be pissed at me.

Ok... darn. I had no idea. You can't be pissed at me.

Was trying to save you from a beat down.

I have no feeling on at 1 way or the other

I don't know why... I don't know them and had no idea. Maybe pass that along. Not sure they're aware. She told me when I asked her why her wrist was bandaged...

I'm aware of all the bullshit

Ok... I'm not... you can fill me in if you're feeling generous.

Lol

Let's not and say we did. I don't think it will be beneficial in any way shape or form

Ok. No prob. It should be ancient history. I have no quarrel with your lil dude. I just noticed I didn't see her so often for a spell and sometimes she would hang up the phone in the middle of a 3 hour call... those both gave me pause... in hindsight.... you know... DUH...

Sorry. I kind of am writing a small novella about our weird little lives for a CD insert. We did some great music. I have little to write about in this chapter.

But I won't bug you anymore. See ya.